

>> The Kentucky Domestic Violence Association has existed for more than 30 years. Why was it created, and what is the association's mission?

SHARON: KDVA was incorporated in 1982 to provide support, technical assistance and a public voice for the shelters and survivors that we serve. As the shelters started, they realized they needed a voice and to be able to work with other state organizations, state government, courts, law enforcement and other groups. KDVA was able to speak on behalf of all the shelters. There are 15 shelters now, one for every Area Development District.

Another part of KDVA's mission is simply to keep shelters in existence — to advocate on their behalf before the legislature for additional funds. Also, because we are not in the direct service business every day, we have the ability to look for funding or look for resources for some additional services that we can provide to survivors. We've been able, for example, to work on immigration issues and to put together language accessibility, to help the shelters with that issue. Mary Savage does a lot of work with advocates and survivors to help

them with legal issues and to figure out how to approach various courts, and how to smooth out protective-order issues. We have an entire economic justice project where we provide financial assistance and support to survivors.

Approximately how many women (or men) and children does KDVA and the state's shelters assist each year? Are there stipulations on who can enter shelters?

SHARON: We serve about 5,000 women and children in shelters and about 25,000 non-residentially, each year. We also have about 30,000 crisis hotline calls. We provide services to anyone who is a survivor of domestic violence. Obviously, there are some guidelines, such as you can't have drugs, alcohol or weapons in the shelter. If you violate those rules you are a threat to other residents, and we have to find somewhere else for you to stay. We do provide services to male victims, as well. In some places we don't house them in the shelter, but we make sure they have alternative arrangements. We provide services to all victims and their dependent children.

With what are the 15 domestic violence shelters across the state tasked? What services and special programs do they offer victims?

SHARON: The Cabinet for Health and Family Services contracts with KDVA, and then we subcontract with the 15 shelter programs. They're each required to be the regional domestic violence program for their ADD. They're required to have all the basic services. We are different from other states. In other states, they have lots of free standing shelters that don't provide court advocacy, or don't provide support groups. Or they may have free-standing advocacy agencies that don't provide shelter. But we require all of our shelters to provide holistic services.

Every shelter in the state is required, first of all, to have the 24-hour crisis line and to have a safe, secure shelter. Each shelter has what we call case management, which means they help people figure out what it is they need to live a safe life. In some cases, they may want to return home, they just want the violence to stop. In other cases, they want to start a new life and look at housing and educational opportunities.



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

The "comfort zone," located inside the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association's headquarters, is a collection of items that are available to people attending KDVA trainings to make them more comfortable throughout their time there.